

Health improvement

Skilled for Health (SfH)

ContinYou has been involved in the national SfH programme since its inception in 2000. (See www.continyou.org.uk for further information.) ContinYou has also run a SfH taster session in Wales. It took place in Rhyl and the participants were people who had been unemployed long term. Job Centre Plus, who commissioned this work, were encouraged by the initial impact and are currently exploring funding to put on some longer interventions.

Health literacy

As a result of its involvement in SfH, ContinYou has become a leading third sector partner in the development of health literacy within England. This involves, in addition to Skilled for Health, assisting the Department of Health (DH) in the development of a Strategic Framework for Health Literacy. As part of this, in October 2007, ContinYou organised a national Health Literacy Symposium. The key purpose was to bring together a number of experts and interested parties, from a variety of academic and practice backgrounds, to enable a facilitated, focused discussion, which would ultimately result in a shared agreed definition and understanding of health literacy. It would give professionals working in this field access to current academic thinking, as well as drawing attention to evolving practice within the NHS.

Following on from this discussion, the DH is currently drafting a consultative document setting out its vision for a strategic framework for health literacy, which ContinYou will play a leading role in helping to shape. ContinYou is also a member of the DH-funded national Health Literacy in Primary Care Group, which is looking at how to engage primary care clinicians in discussions about the impact of health literacy in clinical settings.

Research

In addition to the above, ContinYou is also a partner in a research consortium, led by London South Bank University, which has been awarded funding by the National Social Marketing Unit to examine the social costs that are borne by people who have skills for life needs. ContinYou's role is to advise on the development of the qualitative element of the study, using our knowledge of community involvement, PPI and skills for life to ensure that the research instruments are pitched at an appropriate level for the potential participants – in other words, to advise on participant engagement from a user perspective.

Prostate health awareness in the workplace

In 2003, ContinYou undertook a research study to explore male employees' knowledge about prostate health and intentions to seek medical help if they had a problem. ContinYou provided health promotion interventions for three Consignia (formerly the Post Office) businesses in the West Midlands. Working with researchers from Warwick University, ContinYou managed a postal survey, provided an information campaign and nurse-led sessions to 2,700 male employees. The project was evaluated for the effectiveness of workplace-based men's health and its usefulness in similar work environments. The project report was published jointly by the Men's Health Forum and ContinYou in 2003.

Prostate health awareness in the community

As a result of the above work, ContinYou was commissioned in 2005 to undertake a twelve-month pilot to deliver a set of expertly agreed messages about the prostate and its function. It was very clearly seen as a programme about male awareness of prostate health, and not prostate

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cancer. The key purpose of the intervention, nationally determined by the DH, was to test the effectiveness of the agreed messages on pre-determined populations who were seen as being at a higher risk of developing prostate problems. Throughout the programme ContinYou worked with the National Prostate Cancer Steering Group, which was convened by the DH and comprised DH officials, both clinical and non-clinical, as well as representatives of various national prostate and men's charities, such as the Men's Health Forum and the Prostate Cancer Charity. The steering group's role was to ensure that the key messages were delivered.

ContinYou undertook this work in Coventry during the autumn of 2006, and developed a number of campaign materials, such as posters and drinks mats on which the key messages were displayed. The main recipients of the messages were men over 50 and/or men from African Caribbean backgrounds. This community are deemed to be of particularly high risk of developing prostate problems, including prostate cancer. The intervention was delivered in a variety of community settings, such as pubs, working men's clubs, and delivered in a variety of ways, for instance, using local media, expert talks/training, displaying posters at eye level in men's toilets.

Work with young fathers

Supporting Young Dads (SYD) was a three-year project funded by DH Section 64 grant. Its aim was to pilot innovative and effective ways of reaching and supporting young men who are fathers. The project helped to take forward the Social Exclusion Unit's recommendations on teenage pregnancy, particularly with regard to targets identified in the Sure Start Plus pilot programmes.

While there have been a number of studies that explore young fathers' views on, and participation in, their children's lives, as yet there have been few evaluated practical initiatives that provide young fathers with the kind of support that they want or need in order for them to play an active role in providing for and caring for their children.

In the first year, SYD aimed to reach young fathers in two pilot localities, one rural and one urban, chosen because of their high teenage pregnancy rates and a track record in partnership working. ContinYou worked closely with the teenage pregnancy co-ordinator and other key stakeholders in each of the pilot sites to ensure that the project added value to local strategies. The young fathers contacted by the outreach workers helped to plan support services and also design information materials for other young fathers and for younger boys at high risk of becoming teenage fathers.

SYD started in November 2000, with the first pilot site, Wolverhampton, appointing a part-time youth worker who was already working at Base 25, a local drop-in centre for young people. The Dearne Valley pilot was managed by Rotherham YMCA; it covered an area of the South Yorkshire Coalfields that extended across three health authorities and three local authorities: Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster.

ContinYou appointed an external evaluator from Working With Men to assess the effectiveness of the various interventions piloted and shared learning from the project by publishing a report. ContinYou published its findings from this work, which was disseminated nationally via the Teenage Pregnancy Unit (TPU).

Evaluation of cleaning and infection control training

In 2003, ContinYou's health improvement and lifelong learning segments collaborated with the NHS University to evaluate the outcomes of the above training for non-traditional learners in the NHS. Working in six English areas, ContinYou recruited and trained local interviewers to conduct qualitative research on the learning experience of a group of NHS employees who had, until then, been given few learning opportunities in the health sector.

Evaluation of Essex Teenage Pregnancy Strategy (TPS)

As a result of its work with young fathers, ContinYou was commissioned in 2005 to undertake an evaluation of Essex County Council's TPS. ContinYou conducted a mix of telephone and face-to-face interviews with a variety of different operational and strategic partners within both the statutory and voluntary sectors, in order to gain their understanding of how the service was performing. By combining this qualitative information with an analysis of performance against key national indicators, ContinYou produced, in April 2006, a report with recommended actions for Essex CC. As a result of this work, ContinYou has been recommissioned, by Essex CC, to undertake an analysis of the needs of young carers within the county.

A guide to NHS children's services

Also in 2005, ContinYou developed, at the request of TEN, a short guide to children's services in the NHS. Although primarily aimed at elected members, the guide would be helpful for anyone wishing to understand the different organisations and professions who deliver children's services within the NHS.